

NO VISIBLE MEANS OF SUPPORT

by Paul Rademacher

For years, I had been coming into my local building supply store knowing that any question I had, Bob could answer. In my career as a contractor, his advice was priceless. The creativity and knowledge he brought to the problems I encountered saved me many thousands of dollars. He, more than anything else, was the reason I shopped there rather than the store two miles down the street.

One day, I stopped by Bob's desk only to find that he had been laid off. No warning, no apologies from management. Though they wouldn't admit it, Bob was too expensive. They were convinced his job could be done by someone with less experience. I started shopping with the competitor from that point on. It has always seemed exceedingly shortsighted to me that human creativity and knowledge are so undervalued in our society. In a time when we are confronted by so many economic and environmental constraints, human creativity and knowledge are truly unlimited resources. People matter.

And people want to matter. There is a longing deep in the human heart to live a life of significance.

In my years of being a pastor, I noticed that there was one issue that came up time and again in counseling sessions. So many wanted to have a sense of excitement and meaning in their work, to contribute of their creativity, but instead often found themselves locked in jobs that stole their energy and passion.

This capacity to create is built into our being. Without a venue for creative self expression we can feel intense frustration that we are living only half lives. Something within us keeps nudging us toward more, yet we turn away from that impulse because we are afraid of not being able to meet our financial needs if we take the risk. That tension between self-expression and the need for security seems to be built into the spiritual journey.

As we pursue our passion we can sometimes find ourselves at odds with our culture. That is because true creativity is an expression of something NEW. And that newness is often misunderstood, feared, or resisted because it has the potential to bring change.

Try as we may, we cannot help but fear change because of the uncertainty it generates. Society shelters us from that fear by maintaining a sense of stability. Those who might upset that order are not always rewarded. And so we are advised to "keep the day job."

The day job can serve a great purpose for a while. It can be a time of testing, honing our skills, incubating our passion. But if we are paying attention—and coming to TMI does seem to cause many to pay attention—inevitably there will come a time when we are faced with a stark choice: either we follow our inner life and calling or we suffer a gut-wrenching spiritual, psychic, or emotional loss. When the sense of loss becomes great enough we will risk everything for the deeper mystery.

But sometimes it may not even be a choice we make consciously. There are times when life will conspire to move us out of our comfort zone and propel us in the very direction we have been terrified to go on our own. That's what happened to my friend Bob. The last time I saw him, he was radiant, telling me that losing his job was the best thing that ever happened to him. He had started a business he'd been mulling over for years. He was his own boss. But best of all, he was creating, building, and designing in ways he could have never dreamt. In this time of bad economic news, it is important to remember that we are more than our physical bodies. But it may be just as important to consider that we may be more than our professions. Right now, there is more going on than meets the eye. The world is asking us all a question: "Are we willing to answer the inner calling?"

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